

# SOME MANCHESTER STREETS

AND THEIR BUILDINGS

By C. H. REILLY

*Roscoe Professor of Architecture, University of Liverpool.*

THIS is a book of short critical essays, dealing in turn with the every-day architecture of the chief streets of Manchester. Such architecture generally escapes all published criticism, whatever people may say of it in private. That modern architecture should be criticized like other works of Art is obviously a valuable thing alike for the architects and for the public. By its means our streets take on a new and exciting interest. The author has carefully avoided technical terms and has been at pains to make his appreciations and criticisms in a way easily understood by the layman.

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MANCHESTER STREETS  
AND THEIR BUILDINGS





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*The Art Gallery, Mosley Street.*



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To C.E.M.







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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

THE Editor of the *Manchester Guardian* has kindly given permission for the following notes on certain Manchester Streets and their Buildings, which have recently appeared in his paper, to be published in book form. The result must not be considered as a survey of the whole field of Manchester architecture. It is obviously intended for nothing of the sort. Manchester is a commercial city of great wealth and of considerable dignity. The buildings in its main business thoroughfares consciously or unconsciously express its character more clearly, perhaps, than anything else. A study of these buildings, therefore, singly and in the street groups, and of the character they give to these groups seemed worth attempting, if only to stimulate others to go further.



## *Author's Note*

Architectural criticism of modern buildings is only just beginning in England, the *Manchester Guardian* being the first daily paper to publish a critical notice of a new building as it does of a new book or a new play. Yet without such criticism and the informed public taste which it may help to build up we cannot expect a healthy modern architecture. In the days when architecture flourished best in these islands, whether we consider that to be the Gothic or the Georgian period, there was an educated lay public ready and willing to express a critical opinion on every new building. That public has to be recreated and in a democratic age on a vastly greater scale than before. Unless we can do this we cannot save our towns from the destruction which has been threatening them ever since the industrial revolution. The architect is but the servant of the building owner. If the latter desires a vulgar advertising building he can always get it, if not from one architect then from another, but no architect worth his salt desires to execute



## *Author's Note*

such buildings. He of all men wants a public which will genuinely appreciate his art. A proof of this was the kind way in which the Manchester architects received these articles when they appeared in the daily press. Instead of shunning the author they made him their guest. May others now take up the work both in Manchester and in other towns, so that each new structure as it appears may receive on all hands the praise or odium it deserves as a contribution or otherwise to the dignity of the city. In the main streets of a great town more than anywhere else is it true that no man builds to himself alone.

C.H.R.









*The Head of Deansgate.*



## I

### DEANSGATE

DEANSGATE, especially on a fine day, starts well from the irregular and incongruous open space between the Cathedral and the Exchange Station. It is a street of good width and the buildings to begin with are massive and fairly regular. Why I emphasise the fine day is that then the surface of the pavements and roadway forms a broad ribbon of pale grey balancing that of the sky. This ribbon is seen lying evenly between two vertical curtains of black velvety brocade. Standing at the base of the Cromwell statue the effect of the coating of soot, spread with perfect and miraculous evenness over all the buildings (but washed away from the roadway), is not only to bind them together but to reduce all archi-

## *Deansgate*

tectural features to an indistinct pattern, or, in the case of columns, to the folds in the curtain where the light catches the pile. Against such a background when the sun is shining, the traffic and pedestrians look gay and interesting. The Corporation, having thus had the stage hung for them in black, have been very wise in painting their movable furniture—the tram-cars—red and white.

Two black hotels face you and one another at the start, both of which, when examined, are seen to be in that curious secular Gothic that was the reaction of Mr. Ruskin's teaching upon Victorian commerce. That on the left, the Victoria, is the more monumental. Its narrow curved front facing the Cathedral space stands up boldly, while its long flank, called Victoria Buildings, is a serious, massive composition punctuated with two great gateways. These latter consist of square-headed openings with elaborate pointed arches within them. It is worth noticing, however, as indicating how



## *Deansgate*

little the essentials of a great constructional style were appreciated at that time, that these great openings have no proper lintel, and that the mass of the building above appears to stand on the thinnest of corbelled mouldings. The whole vast building is covered with a multitude of small pink polished granite columns, but here the soot has been kind in reducing such uncompromising material to the prevailing tone. Less fortunate is the effect on the carving on either side of the entrance and above each pier dividing the shops. In the black velvet these reliefs might easily be overlooked, yet they represent rather vigorously carved wild animals in their habitats and wilder men hunting them. Obviously Victoria Hotel and Buildings was an important architectural effort in its day and one which still carries itself with an air.

The Grosvenor Hotel opposite, another long building, is a far looser composition—so loose, indeed, that large Corinthian columns appear at intervals, running through its Gothic front.

The Deansgate Hotel, which follows it, on the right-hand side, though smaller, is far better architecturally. It consists of a simple composition of three big bays, and must have looked strong and simple, like some Gothic storehouse, before the huge gilt wooden letters were spread across its front. Next to the Deansgate Hotel, still on the right-hand side, is another and, I should judge, a more recent Gothic building than any of its predecessors. It has more feeling, less cast-iron regularity, in its design. It is called Mawson's Buildings, and, instead of incongruous Corinthian columns, has something approaching real buttresses at intervals, while there is a suggestion of tracery to the windows—no doubt very wicked from a commercial point of view when it was done—and there are picturesque traceried gables which would be much admired if in Caen or some other Normandy town.

With Blackfriars on one side and St. Mary's Gate on the other, we reach the crown of the slight rise and the site, one imagines, of the



## *Deansgate*

windmill which, from the advertisement for sale quoted in Proctor's "Memorials," was still in Deansgate as late as 1766, "together with a summer-house and large kitchen garden, well planted with wall fruit." The present buildings just about here, however, are poor and in brick, having neither the charm of country town buildings nor the dignity proper to a metropolis. They are mostly low and mean-looking and covered with advertisements. Anyone who advertises in large letters on the front of his building, in a good street, should pay a tax to his neighbours. In one of those poorer buildings, however, Messrs. Stewart and Stewart have put in a new and effective shop front with a plain wide fascia of black marble with good lettering upon it. Next, however, is the Underwood Building, with an isolated perky little yellow terra-cotta gable quite out of character with its surroundings. As if in dignified protest, there rises immediately another of these big, rather grim Victorian structures, which, strange

## *Deansgate*

as their detail now seems, are not without dignity. This one is Barton House, severe in outline and in general character, but one sees that it has over each of its windows, half-hidden by the soot, a little frivolous carving, rather as if a frocked-coated mourner at a funeral displayed every now and then a lace handkerchief. Then comes the Deansgate Picture House in hard red brick and still harder red terra-cotta, with nothing alluring about its design, and beyond that, again, Armstrong's Building, a very plain and hygienic statement of hospital needs in plate-glass and iron.

All this while, on the other side, there has been facing us the long range of another Victorian Gothic work—that containing the Barton Arcades. It is the same strange Gothic of the period which allowed Corinthian capitals to mingle with Gothic mouldings. In this case the capitals are very elaborate and almost Greek in detail. However, the composition of this building is more sure. Square towers mark the



## *Deansgate*

two great entrances, and a long cast-iron balcony above the shops, recently painted white but anything save Gothic in character, binds the front together. But we shall have no space left for the real Gothic of the Rylands Library if we dally any longer with these strange varieties. However, on the right-hand side we must note the entrance to the Deansgate Arcade, with its richly decorated arch above—the whole one of the most interesting pieces of detail seen so far,—and the rather sad-looking Diocesan House, meaning well in spite of the kinema classic of the upper part of its front. We come now to Messrs. Kendal, Milne and Co.'s premises on both sides of the street, but they need not detain us except to welcome the fact that they are extending the dignified, solid, Italian-looking block on the left-hand side in the manner of the original and not in that of the hard, thin red terra-cotta block they must have built or bought in recent years on the right. Near here on the left, and stretching from South King Street to

## *Deansgate*

John Dalton Street, is a more reasonable Gothic building, in the sense of being more Gothic and possibly less reasonable commercially, with flat bay windows and small picturesque gables well modelled enough to resent the soot. It looks as if the building might have come from the same hand as Mawson's Buildings, already mentioned, but with, perhaps, some thirty years between. Here are the corners of John Dalton Street and Bridge Street, and they offer an amusing contrast, if one has the heart to laugh at such things. On the left is a quiet, well-detailed, demure stone building in the Neo-Grec manner, dignified by a statue in a niche of, I suppose, Dalton, and on the right a glazed, multi-coloured, sprawling public-house which even the soot cannot make bearable. By careful washing, too, of the ground floor its nakedness is only the more thoroughly exposed.

At last we reach the Rylands Library. What it is doing here is a mystery and a blessed one. One notices that it offers two fortress-like towers





*The Rylands Library, Deansgate.*





## *Deansgate*

at its corners to its neighbours, as if to protect the treasures within, which no modern city, with all its wealth, can now either make or command to be made. If these flanking towers, however, suggest the fortress, there is ample indication, by the richness of the entrance and by the great traceried window rising above, of the treasures within and of a noble hall in which to show them. The centre might be a piece of mediaeval Rouen, so beautiful is the design and craftsmanship. The whole building, as seen from Deansgate, has that strange mixture of gracious greeting and shy aloofness, of beauties not wholly revealed, which is of the essence of the Gothic spirit as contrasted with the open welcoming simplicity of the Classic. A great piece of classical architecture, like the Free Trade Hall or even St. George's Hall, Liverpool, could not offer to Deansgate the same gentle reproach and reminder of a better life that does this delightful and romantic apparition.

After it, what is one to look at ? But it would be unfair to the rest of the street not to mention the quiet block of Inland Revenue offices stretching from Hardman Street to Atkinson Street, and, of course, one cannot help seeing the great block of the Royal London Insurance Buildings. It is, however, one of those formless, bulbous buildings, with too many turrets and spreading gables, which belong neither to the Gothic nor to the Classical tradition, but try to borrow from both, a thing which could only be done with a certain naïveté in the days of the early Renaissance. On this huge scale and to-day, when everything is known, such naïveté becomes foolishness and affectation. The Milton Hall, however, farther down on the right, is a building of considerable grace, with the long fluted pilasters and Georgian windows of our late English Renaissance. It is the last thing. After this the street seems to disappear into a wilderness of railway regions into which I confess I did not venture.







*King Street, Lower Part.*

II

KING STREET

As all Manchester knows, King Street is not one but two streets. The King Street above Cross Street has nothing in common with the King Street below, beyond a very partial alignment. That above is a wide, spacious road with the air of a cul-de-sac, largely free from wheeled traffic. It is, too, an abode of big business. There are the banks and insurance offices. The other King Street is narrow, intimate, and devoted to retail trade, and in the shopping hours it is blocked with motor-cars and thronged with possible purchasers, as a bazaar should be. Let us begin our survey with it.

This lower and less majestic King Street starts out of Deansgate in a very ordinary way. Messrs.

## *King Street*

Kendal, Milne and Company's new building on the left is to have the ordinary bull-nosed corner on which our urban authorities everywhere insist. It is balanced, if the term can be used, on the opposite corner with a 45-degree splay. How much more interesting it would be if this narrow street of special activities started from the bigger one with two concave quadrants or a pair of set-back corners! Such a thing would be good business, an open invitation to venture on its allurements. As it is, one rather stumbles into King Street from Deansgate without realising its character. It is not until one has walked along it a little way that one realises its air of leisured civilisation, so different from the other streets in the town. When you do, you wonder how it arrives. It is certainly not due to the buildings, which throughout are very ordinary. But so they are in Bond Street, London, and Bold Street, Liverpool. The fact, of course, is that good shops in a narrow street have in themselves a very inviting



## *King Street*

appearance. You are tempted to cross and recross the street and treat it as a form of the Eastern bazaar, which it really is. That is why no heavy traffic should be allowed down such a street. Fortunately King Street has no gigantic omnibuses to spoil it as Bond Street has, but one day, enjoying it as one should and talking to a friend, I was nearly run down by a lorry. In such a street an indignity of that sort is unbearable.

With regard to the individual buildings there is not much to be said. However hard the architects have struggled to call attention to their separate fronts, the shops below have beaten them, and quite rightly too. The most satisfactory façades for such a street are the simplest. The old plaster one above Messrs. Hall's, at No. 56, is of the right type—a quiet back-ground to the shop. The surrounding gabled and bay-windowed fronts all fail by competing with the shops below, instead of emphasising them. The harder they compete the less satis-

factory they are. For instance, Messrs. Goodall's premises on the left-hand side call attention to the superstructure at the expense of the shops. Such work, when solidly done and the timber left to find its natural grey, may be all very well in the country, but seems almost as much out of place here in the heart of Manchester as it does in Messrs. Liberty's new building just off Regent Street. In both cases it is an affectation detrimental to metropolitan manners, just as are exaggerated country clothes.

The buildings, then, being unimportant, the important things are the shops and their fascia boards. It is disappointing to find so few of the former good, and the lettering on so many of the latter formless and vulgar. The best shop fronts are two of the older ones, which are simple and unaffected—Messrs. Finley's, at No. 46, and Messrs. Hall's, at No. 56. The value of such simplicity can be strikingly seen by comparing the latter with a near neighbour, all curls and artificial graces, which distract the

## *King Street*

eye from the goods within. In the matter of lettering, very important but little understood by shopkeepers, one may mention Messrs. Cheyne's, No. 24, and Messrs. Lawson's, No. 18, where the way the names are displayed suggests that good taste will also be found in the commodities within.

The late Georgian country doctor's or lawyer's house, No. 35, with its lower wings on either side separating it from the shops, is a pleasant interlude and a rest to the eye. May the bank that possesses it refrain from rebuilding for some time yet! This bank, the Manchester and Liverpool District Bank, has, too, a fine plaster pavilion next door, entirely devoted to a large and dignified entrance. It is in the manner of Regency plaster and reminds one of the lost glories of Regent Street. Long may it do so! But we are near the end of the street, and the shops are already giving way to offices. Unfortunately, before one crosses into the other King Street one cannot help being aware of the



## *King Street*

jarring note made by a cream glazed building entirely out of key with its surroundings. How much better the quiet but interesting brickwork of the Ottoman Bank looks, or the amusing little doll's-house-like building of the Eagle Insurance Company at the opposite corner !

Traversing Cross Street we are now in the other King Street, and at once in a totally different atmosphere. There is no building with doll's-house features here. All is big, whether with the more assertive bigness of Lloyds' Bank Chambers or the more reserved bigness of the Bank of England. But how can banking produce such contrasts within one hundred years ? Have its ideals altered so much within that time ? Is banking no longer the doyen of the commercial world ? Perhaps it is that our modern bankers just do not think of these things. Although they do not come down to their business in fancy dress they have, apparently, no similar code for their buildings. But this is a serious matter. What is it that is really wrong with



*Upper Part of King Street (Lloyds' Bank on Left-Hand Side )*





## *King Street*

Lloyds' Bank building? It is simply or very largely a matter of dress. If one shaved off all the ornaments and columns of various sizes it might be a satisfying building. Its shape is rectangular, though you are hardly allowed to realise it, and it has a square set-back attic which would emphasise and explain that shape. The windows would have to be made more of one size. The great and over-rusticated arches on which the building stands are not of equal span. One attic has round windows and another square. But the main defect is that it is so difficult to find the wall surface. Now street architecture is chiefly an expression of wall surfaces. It is these surfaces that define the street. If they are all frittered away, not only is there no place on which the eye can rest with comfort, but the street itself suffers. There is an Italian Gothic building higher up on the left-hand side which is almost as rich as Lloyds' building—that of the Vulcan Insurance Company,—but because the plane of the street is main-

tained and the richness is concentrated and plain surfaces are left, the whole is dignified. Contrast this with an almost similarly-sized building next door, that of the Standard Assurance Company, and the difference good composition makes is very apparent. The latter building is all complicated lines and intricacies, traceried gables and moulded chimneys, with no plain surface anywhere. It is so much good stone and labour thrown away for any effect that is gained. But while discussing this point we are missing the great building which, if it only had its coating of soot removed, would be obvious to all as one of Manchester's proudest possessions. Let us return to the Bank of England, lower down on the right-hand side.

The Bank of England is a wide-spreading composition of great Doric columns and arches held together with a big cornice and low-pitched pediment. Like all Cockerell's work its detail is full of invention. Who but he would have dared to compose Doric columns, which are almost



*Bank of England, King Street.*





## *King Street*

Greek in outline, with finely articulated arches ? This building shows the value that can be obtained from rusticated arches when the rustication is cleanly cut. The delightful return flank to Pall Mall gives this very clearly, where one such arch is set in a fine plain field of lightly-channelled stone. This return, with its balanced composition of windows, is as good as any piece of work Cockerell ever did, not excluding his great museum at Oxford. No wonder he was tempted to make the mistake of putting his main entrance into it. However, this is a mistake that has been very well remedied. The new central door in King Street has been excellently done, whoever has been responsible for it. The Sun, Fire and Life building next is a good quiet neighbour in the same spirit, though I fancy the stone hood to the door is a later and not very happy addition.

Farther up the street on the left-hand side are several Gothic buildings, by far the best of which is the Reform Club. Although one may not like the detail to-day, this building has a fine

strong composition, with its line of great windows at the first floor level and its balancing turrets. How poor and thin it makes the more recent Gothic buildings near it look, such as that of the London City and Midland Bank, while even the pretty little Norwich Union building seems trifling in comparison.

Taking a final glance at the whole street, one sees how much it gains by its rise and by the way it narrows near the top. The narrowing of the pavements and the balancing projections of the buildings on either side are charming features. What a pity that the great Lancashire and Yorkshire building crowning the street was given both a tower and a lofty gable side by side. Surely one of these might have been placed axially on the centre of King Street. As it is, this building looks as if it had been suddenly exposed instead of having been designed for its position. It starts strongly up to a big cornice half-way up the front, and then changes to a much smaller scale and to rather frivolous detail. How-



## *King Street*

ever, King Street, with all its accidental effects and changes of style, is rather a noble place as it mounts the hill. Its Bank of England and the Italian block of the Foreign Department of the Manchester and County Bank, with its excellent and clear-cut detail, particularly the balcony over the main entrance, are buildings which would grace any thoroughfare in any town, while the strong Gothic tower of the other portion of this latter bank adds the note of picturesqueness without which an English street is never quite complete.

III

ST. ANN STREET AND ST. ANN'S SQUARE

ST. ANN STREET can hardly be called a street, it has so little sense of continuity. Its buildings are not only in the mixture of styles and types which we take for granted nowadays, though that in itself is one of the strangest phenomena of modern English cities, and one in which they most differ from English cities of any other age, but they have little alignment one with the other. This is particularly noticeable on the left-hand side looking from Cross Street. St. Ann's Church—older, I suppose, than anything else in the neighbourhood—maintains a slightly supercilious aloofness by standing with one flank a little turned from the street, while Messrs. Kendal, Milne and Co.'s block at the far end does the same thing, but at an opposing angle.

## *St. Ann's Square*

Then, for its length, the street has an unusual number of large breaks in its planes—St. Ann's Square to the right and the spaces about the church to the left. Such breaks, especially when they contain a hint of bright spring verdure against the black curtain of the street, as in spring at the east end of the church, are very valuable, but even more so in a street of continuity and definite purpose than here. For the occupations of St. Ann Street appear as varied as the buildings—clubs, insurance offices, banks, and millinery establishments being among the number. When I asked a shopkeeper what he thought was the real note and purpose of the street the reply came pat—an entrance to the shopping centre of the town, which is St. Ann's Square. So there it is; even the shopkeeper within its borders does not consider St. Ann Street as a thing in itself, but merely the gateway to something else. Still, gateways and outer courts are often interesting, and this one has at least one first-class building within the circuit of its walls.

Let us begin our survey at the Cross Street end.



On the left hand we have the Constitutional Club and on the right the block of buildings of the British Dominions Insurance Company. The former, especially to Cross Street, is a free adaptation of the full Italian Renaissance boldly treated, while the latter is a mixture of Gothic and Early Renaissance motives. However, even the Constitutional Club cannot keep to its constitution. Directly it turns from Cross Street it plunges into other motives. Just as the Gothic architects of Victorian days often compromised their Gothic with Corinthian columns, so did the classical ones of the period with Gothic shapes. The club, after a fine straight façade to Cross Street, in which the windows are well and evenly spaced on a plain field, turns away from the straightforward Italian manner at the corner with a circular oriel of Gothic origin, and, once having relieved itself of the duty of obeying the rules, like a true diehard it goes any lengths, bursting forth on the St. Ann Street flank into a medley of everything, from a Greek pediment at the top to French Renaissance curved





*William Deacon's Bank, St. Ann Street.*



## *St. Ann's Square*

window and balcony below. Yet, in spite of this very unconstitutional proceeding, the whole building is dignified and impressive because its main lines are simple and rectangular. No doubt, too, the soot helps by obliterating the detail and emphasising the uniformity. One may say it carries its black broadcloth as a gentleman. Not so the building opposite. Of later date and of far more complicated outline, it cannot carry its soot with as level a head. Even when it is as black as a hat it will remain perky, because its outline against the sky is of that nature. It has, too, no plain wall space to rest the weary eye. The most romantic buildings require that, as the architect of the Rylands Library so well understood. The same remarks apply to the next building on the left-hand side. This was once a multi-coloured structure of red brick and yellow terra-cotta, but even the kindly soot cannot produce a plain surface when there is not one. What a contrast there is opposite in Williams Deacon's Bank! This, apart from the church,

## *St. Ann Street and*

is the great work of the street. Let us pause and examine it.

The bank, as all Manchester knows, is a composition of a larger stone block, the bank proper, and a smaller brick block containing chambers, with an arched entrance serving as a link between them. The problem the architect had to solve was to give due expression and character to each, with their separate purposes, and yet to give unity to the whole. How well he has done it is a measure of the greatness of the architect, whose name, Gregan, should be a household word in Manchester. Of course here, too, the soot has helped by making the two buildings of different materials of one tone, but the real relation is a subtle one of carefully related forms. How satisfying are the St. Ann Street fronts of both these blocks! The three great ground-floor windows of the bank not only express its purpose but do so with an originality of detail in the three fine rusticated arches to the ground floor, with their panelled and columned in-filling, which is both stimulating and

## *St. Ann's Square*

satisfying. The upper two storeys of this block seem to me good, but not so good as the ground floor, while the return to the Square suffers on the ground floor by undue compression to its narrow frontage. The smaller brick and stone block is even more satisfying, though it does not attempt so much. If anyone wants to build a small three-storeyed structure for almost any domestic purpose in a town, where could a better model (outside Italy) be found? After the exuberance of the Constitutional Club and the insouciance of the insurance building, this bank group is a model of civic reserve and good manners combined with strength and character.

After so good a building as this bank one is apt to do less than justice to its neighbours. The Equitable building, for instance, seems in comparison a long, intricate pile of wire-drawn stonework. Certainly its two domes and many gables have a picturesque outline when seen in the distance. Then, too, the sharp perspective makes its many vertical lines coalesce. Seen close



## *St. Ann Street and*

at hand, however, their thinness as forms of structural expression and their hardness as surface decoration become very apparent. The Georgian brick baldness of Mr. Frank Drury's premises opposite—not the imitation Tudor portion in St. Ann's Place—is on the whole more satisfying. The semi-circular brick arches to the first-floor windows form a good continuous motive. This building, at any rate, does not pretend to be more than it is. The difficulty is to succeed on the higher plane, to be equally sincere and straightforward. That is the great merit of Williams Deacon's Bank—one cannot help returning to it.

In the rest of this short street there is only one building of any interest, and that is one which is more of a curiosity than anything else. It is the tall, narrow-fronted stone building over Messrs. John Bacon and Company's shop on the left-hand side. It is an ungainly structure, but with a strange power about its blocky stonework, rather nightmarish, but whether the building was the nightmare of a Gothic Revival architect who felt

## *St. Ann's Square*

compelled to use Greek detail, or of a Greek Revival one who felt compelled to use Gothic detail, I cannot say. It is an amusing puzzle.

St. Ann's Square may be the centre of Manchester shopping, and St. Ann Street but a vestibule to the Square, but to an architect the Square is itself but an atrium to the church, and that in spite of its possessing the Exchange on one side. There is, indeed, no building in the Square of any particular interest save the elegant lady-like strip of the Manchester Liners' building. The Exchange oppresses one with its weight and clumsiness without giving any sense of the dignity of commerce as does the bank. Its great theatrical semi-domed entrance, with its two lower entrances under heavy balconies on either side, might be the entrances to some super-super-kinema. There is, however, as seen from the Square, one little tower to relieve the pomposity of the Exchange—a charming little circular composition of two tiers of columns, one above the other, which must belong to a more graceful and

## *St. Ann Street and*

gracious age. I suppose they did big business in those days too, but did not feel that it had to be indicated by the weight of the stone in the façades.

Turning back to look at the church, one sees one has done an injustice in passing over the old plaster block between the Liners' building and the bank. This stands bravely on four great arches with Corinthian pilasters between. There are two long ranges of windows above, and the cornice carefully takes up the line of that of the bank. Like the bank, this is a building showing a good sense of neighbourliness and civic manners. On the opposite side, too, the building above Mr. Cornish's book-shop is worth noting for its elegant first-floor central window. If, however, the most distinguished shops in Manchester do not occupy very distinguished buildings, surely they will all have very good shop fronts. I am afraid this is not the case. From the opposite side of the Square only one appears to have any elegance. It is again the book-shop, No. 16,



## *St. Ann's Square*

and consists of four finely-fluted and finished Corinthian columns and their entablature. Nothing could be simpler and in better taste, but I fear it is not very modern. The great modern example is at the corner of the Square and Exchange Street. It is an exciting piece of work, in fumed oak, wrought iron, and glass, but it fights unfairly with the Royal Insurance building above. This latter is not a bad building and deserved a quieter tenant at its base. Certainly it spreads itself with its widely-spaced columns a little loosely round the corner, but its pose of elderly picturesque exuberance was not such a bad one until it was discomfited by the excitable child now attached to it.

Exchange Street does not contain anything of particular interest. The buildings opposite the Exchange seem as if unnaturally subdued by its presence, which perhaps is a good thing, for they are not in themselves of great interest. At a last view, as one returns through the Square, one realises afresh that it is the church which gives

### *St. Ann Street and St. Ann's Square*

the note to the whole neighbourhood. If the shops are the most distinguished in the town, they owe the distinction of their position, and ultimately, I dare say, their own, to the church. Standing there at the head of the Square, with its broad simple flank facing it, and with its strong tower recessed at one end and its beautiful apse at the other, the church casts something of its innate dignity over the whole open space which even the corpulent Exchange cannot entirely overcome.







*Cross Street, Albert Square End.*

IV

CROSS STREET

CROSS STREET is, I am informed, the most expensive street in Manchester when it comes to a question of buying sites. Looking at it from either the Market Street end or the Albert Square one this is a little difficult to understand. It has not the air of a street that is paved with gold. From Market Street it starts with a series of rather poor buildings architecturally, and from Albert Square you see a long hoarding to vacant land. The street, too, has various twists and kinks in it which suggest a casualness as to building lines, difficult at first glance to reconcile with the idea that every square inch is worth pounds. Probably, however, that is the real explanation of its irregularities. In its emergence from a country lane the cost of widening and straightening has

been more than the ratepayers have cared to face. However, there it is, an irregular street of uneven width, without a single building in it of first-class interest or merit, and yet its land values are fabulous—not in itself an uninformative commentary on the ideals of the modern town.

Let us begin at the Market Street end. On the left-hand side the bizarre character of Market Street forces itself even into this holy ground of world-wide commerce. There is the first block over Messrs. Dingley's fruit shop, a respectable old plaster building, but knocked out of all semblance of age and dignity by huge advertisement lettering and electric signs. I am afraid the *Manchester Guardian* building, the next block on this side, is not much better in this respect. With a brilliantly illuminated neighbour blinking and blaring at you, especially if you publish an evening paper, you must, I suppose, do something of the kind yourself. If the architecture of your building is coarse and dull, with no delicacies to be spoilt, the temptation to make it bright with



## *Cross Street*

coloured lights is not so easily to be resisted, and with reason. The *Manchester Guardian* building is not worthy of a newspaper which has done so much for architecture and all the arts. Looking at its warehouse coarseness, without the corresponding warehouse strength, no one would imagine it to be the "spiritual home" that an important section of England feels it to be. It is a Gothic building of a later date than the Gothic Revival, when most of the genuine enthusiasm which inspired that misdirected movement had evaporated. The result is that all sorts of conflicting motives from other styles have been introduced and the genuine Gothic motives have themselves lost their force. The buttresses, for instance, that run up the front in the form of piers are of a nondescript kind, while a large and coarse Greek fret is worked into the brickwork above the fourth-floor windows, and there is a Roman pediment to the entrance. If, too, one looks at the building from a non-stylistic point of view, as a piece of decorated street plane, one

sees, firstly, that it is in a poor material—a hard, machine-made red brick in a street which, if any, deserved the more dignified stone,—and, secondly, that the fenestration leaves no plane surfaces nor is in itself well distributed over the face of the building. It is in window groups of twos and threes. Obviously it is the duty of the paper to rebuild at the first opportunity and set a standard not only to Cross Street but to the whole of Manchester.

The next block on the same side, Haworth's Buildings, stretching from Moulton Street to Newmarket Street, is of the same coarse Gothic, but superior in dignity in that it is a stone building. I have a feeling that no material but stone should be allowed in the main streets of a large town. Stone, especially in smooth ashlar blocks, has an innate dignity to which no artificial material can rise. This building does not, however, do justice to its material because it attempts to use it in too many ways. There are, for instance, welcome plain spaces of clean

## *Cross Street*

stonework between the windows and some panels of minutely and cleanly cut ornament, but, in contrast to these, there is over the entrance on the canted corner a heavy turret with two coarse but baby turrets clinging to it. Here then is a Scotch baronial treatment calling for comparatively rough stonework in conjunction with an urbane one in the rest of the building. It is like a man in a frock coat wearing a peaked cap, but, to make up for the incongruity, having the cap made in silk. Next we come to the Commercial Building, an Italian Gothic block with small granite columns to the windows. If one must have mediæval Gothic buildings in a modern town, there is no doubt the Italian type is the best. Such buildings have their ancestry in towns and not in the open country. They permit, therefore, of a regularity of outline and of windows which makes for better street architecture than the turrets and gables, which derive from the mediæval castle with its anti-town history. This particular building consequently seems restful



and unpretentious after the others, though it has one extraordinary eccentricity in the placing of its main entrance, which is neither in the centre nor at an end of the façade, but just anywhere.

All this time we have been very conscious of the overpowering Exchange Building on the right-hand side. It certainly masters the street, but it does so rather by mass and brute strength than by any finer qualities. This heaviness is emphasised, too, on the Cross Street front, by the bulge in the façade. Not only has this long façade a central projecting feature, as almost inevitable, but the wings on either side of it fall back slightly at angles from the street plane. That is, I suppose, what comes of the extraordinary value of the land in Cross Street—no one, not even the owners of the Exchange, cares to give up a single inch. The same thing happened in the long front of the South Kensington Museum to Cromwell Road, though there the bend is concave, not convex. In both cases, so it seems to me, a short-sighted policy has been adopted



*Cross Street, looking towards Royal Exchange.*





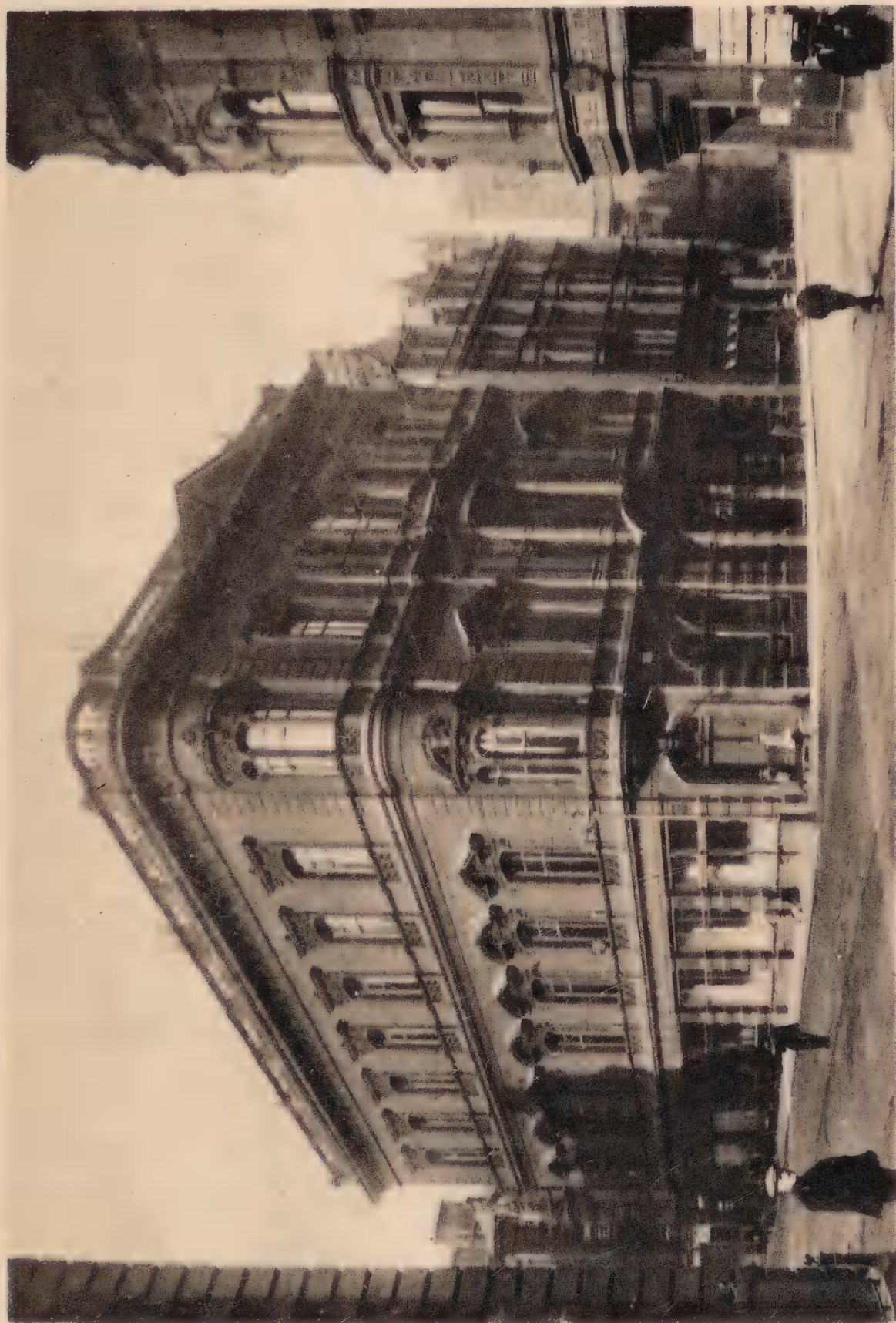
## *Cross Street*

and the dignity of a vast building impaired for a few inches of land. If the Exchange had had a continuous flat front to Cross Street it would at any rate have had a less pushing, overbearing appearance, to the great gain of the street. The general corpulence of its architectural detail would not have been so emphasised as it is now. How corpulent it is—not opulent, no one would have objected to that—is to be clearly seen when one notices the contrast between the minutely-carved Corinthian capitals and the fat, unfluted columns below them, or the heavily detailed entablature above. A Corinthian capital implies, or should imply, a certain standard of elegance throughout the rest of the building. Here we have Corinthian capitals to a Bœotian building. But one meets the Exchange everywhere and has said enough about it in other chapters. Let us pass on. We come at once to the Edinburgh Building on the right-hand side, but that is to be pulled down shortly, and one need not regret it. A bad kink, too, in the street will be flattened out

in the process. The next little building, which will also go, is more a matter for regret. No. 24, the building of the General Assurance Company, has some appearance of sedateness and elegance, especially in the upper storeys. The next buildings at the opposing corners of St. Ann Street are the British Dominion Building, youthful and picturesque, and the Constitutional Club, superior, sedate, and dignified, at any rate on its Cross Street front. But these have been dealt with already. Opposite is a very harsh and uncompromising piece of Gothic Revival work with a spiky corner turret, the building of the Guardian Assurance Company. So narrow is the turret that the plate glass of the windows has had to be bent to the curve, which makes that very unromantic material even less suited to Gothic than when it is flat.

Here, with the little late Georgian Cross Street Chapel looking down St. Ann Street, follows a complete contrast. One can hardly imagine a greater. The quiet little church is a very sober and secular thing, but around it on every side are





*The Constitutional Club, Cross Street.*





## *Cross Street*

commercial buildings using for their everyday purposes the Gothic forms associated in the average mind with cathedral or parish church, and distorting them to obtain the greater areas of plain glass office work demands. The chapel looks business-like and simple, whereas they seem to be playing at their various jobs and doing them rather badly. The chapel, too, manages to give a good lesson in the value of plain wall surface. The bricks are small and hand-made and therefore do their best to give quality to the surface. One wishes that the windows had had their sash bars left in place, instead of having had to submit to a compromise with the prevailing Gothic Revival spirit by means of a pattern of leaded lights rather like that of a linoleum.

We come now to Lloyds' Bank Buildings and the others at the four corners of King Street, all of which were dealt with when considering that street, with the exception of the Alliance Building with its three curly gables over a hard front. These gables look as if at last the building

had freed itself from the mechanical Gothic of the lower storeys and was rejoicing with a little unseemliness in the fact. It is not a good building at all and need not detain us. The little plaster building next door, sadly in need of paint and probably doomed to early destruction, which stretches from Town Hall Lane to Tib Lane on the left-hand side, is far more interesting. It is interesting because it maintains the wall plane of the street and yet has more closely-packed windows than any modern structure. It does this by emphasising the architraves and the hoods of the windows and by repeating them endlessly. It is not a great piece of architecture, but it proves that with a regular distribution of windows you can have a greater glass area, which will not destroy the wall plane, than you can with any of the modern tricks of picturesque grouping. One can imagine from the naïveté of the windows, one over the other with exactly the same pediments and detail, that the design was not by an architect at all. It was probably by someone who knew



## *Cross Street*

less and achieved more, like so many of the colleges at Cambridge. The moral to-day is not, however, not to go to an architect, but to go to one who has assimilated his knowledge and does not want to display it all, and all at the same time. Opposite, on the right-hand side, is a long gash in the street filled with a hoarding. One cannot help noticing here what an enhanced value the black buildings of Manchester give to all bright colours. How bright the golden ships of the British Empire Exhibition poster look, and how gay the orange young lady, who is warning modern girlhood not to wear clothes like hers—much brighter and gayer than the same posters do in Liverpool.

Bow Chambers is a stone block in what I am beginning to think is a special type of Manchester Gothic, strong and uncompromising, if a little grim. It has plenty of plain wall surface, which gives the building a sedateness its later arrivals lack.

Cross Street ends with John Dalton Street. At the corner is another little building in a sort

of Dutch Renaissance architecture, in character very like to the Eagle Assurance Building at the corner of King Street. It is the Scottish Amicable building and reminds one a little of a doll's house. One cannot treat such architecture very seriously. Both these structures seem designed to show all the various modelled bricks in the box—pediments, turrets, little turned columns,—yet because the buildings are small and the various parts put together so naïvely they have not the same flaunting effect as Lloyds' Building. One has only to glance across John Dalton Street, however, to the Liverpool and London and Globe Building, to see that they are not very serious architecture. But this brings us into Albert Square and its many problems, which are not those of a street and cannot be dealt with here.







*Peter Street, from St. Peter's Square.*

V

PETER STREET

PETER STREET starts out of St. Peter's Square with as strange an assortment of buildings as the monuments in the Square promise to be until a certain Gothic cross finds another site. After the ordered architecture of the Square itself, Peter Street at once rushes to the other extreme. On the left-hand side is the vast and disordered mass of the Midland Hotel, and on the right a long and equally disordered range of unpretentious buildings of various heights. It is a debatable question whether the noble word architecture can be applied to either side. It is not that the one building is too big and the others are too insignificant, but that neither are organised into any comprehensible scheme.

## *Peter Street*

Architecture might be defined as building organised for convenience and beauty. The ant-heap, however big, can never become architecture, nor the cave, however small. The Midland Hotel seems to me to belong to the first kind of building. It is a vast cellular structure, the cells of which, elaborate as they are, appear to have no organic relation to one another. Study the Peter Street front as you will, you cannot discover the law of its composition. Peter Street itself is irregular in its plan at this point, but it is not nearly as irregular as the building which rises above it. Windows, turrets, balconies, gables are scattered about in endless profusion. Some of the windows are square-headed, some round-arched ; sometimes they are single, sometimes in pairs ; some are oriel windows, others are bays, but why they take these varied forms and what is the law of their periodicity no man knows. It has nothing to do with the Railway Company's proclivities, for the same company has built in the Adelphi, Liverpool,



## *Peter Street*

the most regular and stately hotel in the land. The total result is, consequently, in spite of its size, not nearly as impressive as some of the great warehouses one sees from the train windows in approaching the town. The disorder of the general outline and detail is not helped, either, by the multiplicity of the materials used. They are yellow glazed terra-cotta, brown glazed bricks, and polished granites. All these, while adding to the general complexity, give the resulting *mélange* an oily, gluey texture to which the soot of the town sticks in some places but not in others. Stone in Manchester, as I have pointed out before, receives its soot in a quiet, unruffled way. Gradually the whole building becomes smooth and black with a velvety smoothness. But these hard artificial or polished materials behave differently. They do not “weather”—to use an architect’s phrase. Instead, the dirt collects in some places and not in others, giving, till they are completely washed, the far dirtier appearance a half-washed white man has than a negro. This

building, too, is a rich building, full of ornament, so full indeed that for some time I thought a system of pipes and branch pipes, necessary for the internal economy, was part of the ornament. It is very sad indeed that so much money should have been spent with so little good—indeed, one might say the reverse—to the external appearance of the town.

On the same side of the street, but on the other side of Mount Street, is another big yellow glazed block, the Y.M.C.A. building. It suffers therefore from many of the same disadvantages that the hotel does. On the other hand, it is obvious that a great deal of thought has gone to the design of this building. While it belongs as little to any definite style as the hotel, it yet achieves a certain distinction or style of its own. The architect, realising the limitations of a material which twists in the baking, has been careful to have no great array of mouldings, to keep his ornament small, and to distribute it evenly. The front to Mount Street is

## *Peter Street*

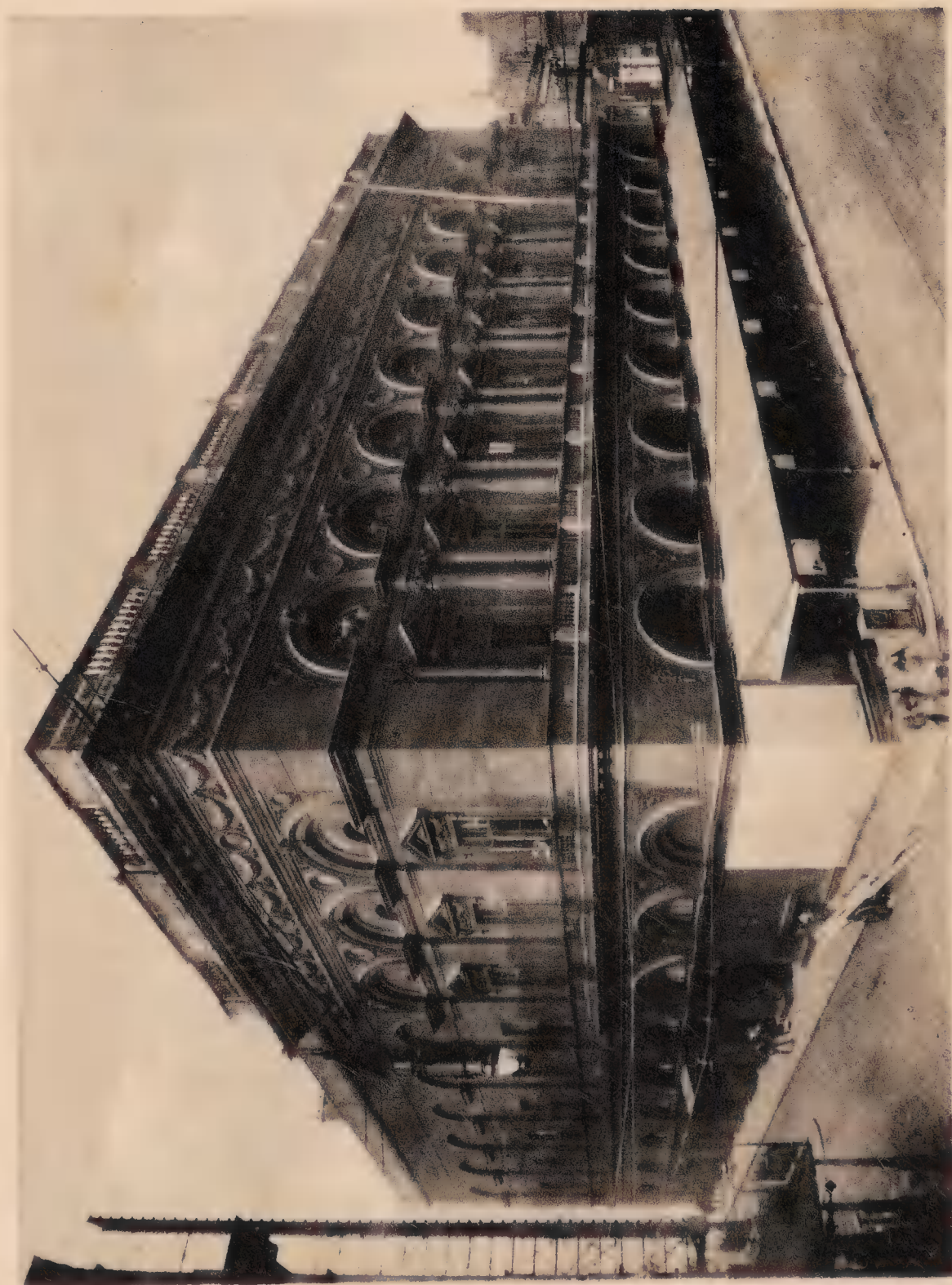
symmetrical, that to Peter Street asymmetrical. On the latter front he has obviously tried to express some big hall in the interior. Everywhere there are signs of care and thought combined with a certain delicacy of expression. If only he had allowed himself a pleasanter material he would have achieved a good and interesting building.

On the opposite side of the street there is the first of the theatres—the poor old Gaiety. Never did it look less gay than now that it has taken to a really gay career. The Gothic spirit consorts less easily with that of the theatre than any other, and not at all with that of the kinema. Above the great placards peep out the pointed heads of the first-floor lancet windows, and along under the cornice is a whole Gothic roof arcade. I should judge it was never a great building, least of all a great theatre, in appearance—all the world knows how great it was in reality—but it must have had the air, before the world's sweethearts and their rough-riders and the



gentlemanly burglars took possession of it, of some pleasant seminary where the gentle graces of deportment might be taught and even occasionally exhibited. Opposite, however, is the real theatre maintaining its royal right to be a theatre, although it, too, has suffered the same fate as the Gaiety. No one can see its great Corinthian columns, with beautiful capitals and fluted shafts—the best in Manchester—its great arch rising high over them, and the pedimented lines of the roof above that without realising that the Theatre Royal is a theatre, and no mean one. It is a building one must always enter with excitement and expectation. This being so, it does not seem good business, on the part of its present users, to bury these noble columns to two-thirds of their height in their posters. The long return flanks of the building to the side streets, which may have been altered when the ownership changed, with their long range of flat arches, seem to me a very good expression of the relation of flank to front in such a building.





*The Free Trade Hall, Peter Street.*



## *Peter Street*

From the days of the Coliseum the arch has been indissolubly connected with the theatre. Here it appears very expressively on the main front and is faintly yet sufficiently echoed on the sides.

Next, on the same side, is the climax of the street, and indeed of architecture in Manchester, as far as I have explored it. It is the great Free Trade Hall. If ever a town endowed its main contribution to political thought with a fine building Manchester has done so here. Look at its scale. The architectural scheme consists of two storeys only, yet they are together almost as lofty as the five-storeyed building opposite. Yet—and this is the strange thing—the building does not seem any bigger than Palladio's so-called Basilica in the little town of Vicenza, in North Italy, so big is the natural scale of building in that country. The building is very like Palladio's in its two tiers of great arches, and obviously derives from it. It has, however, in my opinion, a greater unity, and consequently

greater power, because the main cornice, with its rich frieze of swags of fruit, is proportioned to the whole building and not to the upper storey only. Its corners, too, are managed in a stronger way. They are great plain piers crossed only by the cornices and strong and heavy enough to stop the arches. Notice how strong, too, after any other building in Manchester of the Italian Renaissance type, such as the Cross Street front of the Constitutional Club, are these Free Trade Hall façades, because of the greater depth of all the reveals. The great arches, for instance, of the upper arcade are alone deep enough to imply a monumental thickness of wall. It is one of the great difficulties in modern building, especially in steel-framed ones, to give an appearance of sufficient thickness. There is nothing cardboard-like in this hall. The plane behind the arches, if a long way back, is a rich one, carrying a pedimented window and a tympanum, of figures, of which in each case the central one is a finely-posed seated woman. These groups,

## *Peter Street*

if rather Victorian and complacent in feeling, are all well-designed. Indeed, the ornament throughout the building is very good, with the serious exception of the capitals to the Ionic columns, which are coarse and commonplace. Every part is designed to enhance the scale of the whole. Look how small are the balconies to the first-floor windows, with their little stone balusters, and how, consequently, they enhance the scale of the windows, and these in turn the scale of the arches in which they are set, and how the size of the arches enhances the scale of the whole field of the front. Another fine point is the way the two arcades are set well within the plane of the street. Like all good town buildings, this observes the amenities. It belongs essentially to the street and does not fight with it. The ground arcade is equally fine, with even deeper soffites, but it is spoilt by a very trumpery glass verandah, which now runs the length of the façade. Although the building sails magnificently above it—its 14-ft. or so of



height only reaching to the springing of the lower arches, so great is the scale—this verandah should be removed and a marquise, projecting without supports, put in its place, if cover of the sort is necessary to a later generation. The Free Trade Hall, as all Manchester knows, was the work of one of her most famous architects, Edward Walters, and was built in 1853-6.

After the Hall it is difficult to concentrate on other things. The large Italian stone block opposite — once H.M. Stationery Office — is obviously inspired by the Hall in the sense that it was felt its vis-à-vis should be Italian too. It is a dull structure, however, not calling for comment. No. 29, on the same side, is an interesting little Romanesque building in brick, and then follows the Albert Hall. It is strange that nearly all buildings or monuments connected with the name Albert are unfortunate. This, with its ugly materials, hard details, and restless skyline, is no worse than usual. It is stranger that a building erected after the Free Trade Hall,

## *Peter Street*

in the same street and so close to it, should fall so far from grace. The little cement kinema next to it, the Futurist, is very much better, but it destroys itself with its own overgrown verandah and, of course, with its posters. If no trade has such bad posters as the kinema trade, one must admit that it chiefly inflicts them on its own buildings.

There is still another theatre—the Winter Gardens Cinema—next to the Free Trade Hall, and now for sale. It is a commonplace building in brick and painted stone, with the detail of the suburban villa of thirty years ago. After this, the street contains only two long nondescript Gothic office buildings on either side, dull and without any special character. It seems as if, with the Theatre Royal and the Free Trade Hall, the architectural effort of the street expired. Later on, in its continuation in Quay Street, it recovers itself with another and this time a modern theatre and a fine warehouse, but these must be kept for another chapter. However,

## *Peter Street*

a street which has provided Manchester with its best big building and its worst big building has at any rate achieved some claim to distinction.



## *Portland Street*

### VI

#### PORTLAND STREET

WITH Portland Street it seems to me we reach the essential Manchester. Here is a straight street of good width, some 80 feet, practically lined throughout with Manchester warehouses. I have seen no street in Manchester which gives such an impression of quiet dignity and strength. The buildings are almost all rectangular, and the cornices as level and as regular as in a street in the centre of Paris. In Paris streets, however, the result would come from building regulations limiting heights and projections. Here it is a thing of the spirit, and consequently much more characteristic. However gay and frivolous Manchester banks and insurance offices may be with unnecessary turrets, gables, and bay windows, Manchester will not allow

## *Portland Street*

such licence to her warehouses. They, I suppose, represent the essentials of her trade, the very reason of her existence. They are too near to her heart, therefore, for any light treatment. Hence their simplicity, strength, and sincerity, and consequently their real beauty. Such beauty may have been arrived at almost unconsciously, but that makes no difference. If work is done decently and in order a certain beauty generally arises. I notice the same fine austere character spreads into the surrounding streets of similar buildings. They admit no nonsense, too, only sheer straightforward efficiency. There are warehouse buildings in Charlotte Street, Sackville Street, Princess Street, and Abingdon Street as impressive as any in Portland Street.

It must be remembered, however, that the Manchester warehouses of this neighbourhood imply something more than the storehouses that are called warehouses elsewhere. I take it they are vast wholesale shops with offices, where goods are sold and displayed as well as merely







*Portland Street from Oxford Street.*

## *Portland Street*

stored. The goods, too, vary. They are not so many similarly sized and shaped bales as in Liverpool cotton warehouses. All the more credit, therefore, to Manchester that to house this light and varied occupation she has produced buildings of such orderliness and distinction. The warehouses for similar purposes in London, in St. Paul's Churchyard, for instance, and in the Aldersgate Street neighbourhood, are of not nearly such strong and good architecture. It must, therefore, be something in the character of Manchester which has compelled her architects to respect those buildings whatever they may do with her other structures—her giant hotels, for instance.

Portland Street starts well from Oxford Street with a very good and typical building on the right-hand side exactly in the spirit of the street. It is a long block of some fifty yards with the name of Messrs. Petty and Jones in the centre. It is a solid, sensible, brick building standing on a big stone ground floor with numerous

entrances into it. Above the ground floor rises a great arcade of piers and arches embracing the next two storeys. I counted twenty-three arches. We have the courage to admire a great arcade when we see it in the Coliseum or in the aqueducts at Rome. Let us admire it, then, when we find it in a warehouse here in Manchester. This great range of arches is held together by a long unbroken frieze of small windows, perhaps fifty of them, all exactly alike, and then again by a broad band of plain brickwork and above that a strong, crowning cornice. Such breadth and continuity in a modern town is a magnificent and impressive thing. We all remark it when we see it in the new Town Hall at Stockholm, which has the same effect of a tightly packed range of small windows contrasted with widely spaced larger ones below, and proclaim a new revival of architecture. Here was Manchester doing the same thing some thirty years ago, and doing it almost unconsciously from motives of order and efficiency.



## *Portland Street*

Beaver House, the next building on the same side, on a smaller scale, has very much the same motives and is nearly as good. Then beyond Dickinson Street follows another big block, 113-119, but because it has not the same ordered treatment nor the same strong outline and cornice it is a comparative failure. Even a warehouse must have some ordered architecture. Just windows one over the other like a mill is not sufficient for a big building in a main street of a great town.

On the left-hand side, on which the buildings are not quite so regular and consequently as impressive, the best is probably the block from 110 to 114. This has a strong cornice and a fine arrangement of round arched windows in pairs at the first-floor level. This side, however, amply makes up from Dickinson Street onwards for the next fifty yards or so with one continuous stone design in the manner of a great Italian palazzo. It is somewhat like a country cousin to the Farnese Palace in Rome or to the Reform

## *Portland Street*

Club in London. There are long ranges of pedimented windows, a rusticated ground floor with well-marked entrances, and a great cornice with enriched frieze crowning the whole. The detail is coarse and the proportions not so noble as in the prototypes mentioned, but still the block has power and impressiveness. It is interesting, too, to note how the Portland Street character holds, whether the building is a brick Petty and Jones warehouse with a long range of Romanesque arches or a stone palazzo, with each window a separate unit in the late Italian manner. This shows again that essential style—that is, truth to character—is independent of imitative style.

After passing Princess Street the great thoroughfare, however, goes to pieces for a while on the left-hand side. For the next fifty yards or so there are a succession of small shops and public-houses in small irregular buildings. It is as if a rabble from some hidden purlieu was invading the street and waiting to be driven back by the

## *Portland Street*

police. This will happen when the street completes itself with another great block. The right-hand side meanwhile goes on in stone. The buildings are Gothic—that is to say, they have pointed windows and an occasional gable,—but never mind. The spirit of the street conquers. In general mass and fenestration they are straightforward enough. The great stone block from Abingdon Street to Sackville Street, which looks like a distant cousin to the Town Hall, is nevertheless sober and practical. It can excuse its two corner oriel windows as did the lady with the baby in Mr. Midshipman Easy, by saying they are only little ones.

From Sackville Street to Charlotte Street on the right-hand side is another fifty yards of undistinguished brick building based, I suppose, on the Gothic tradition, but nevertheless with windows that are all square-headed and in five long, level ranges. This and the long unbroken cornice lines help to preserve the character of the street, and to make up for any little



weaknesses in the way of small gables. On the left-hand side, however, at either corner of Charlotte Street, are two excellent buildings which, while paying proper respect to the character of the street, yet show great individuality. One is a new building in Portland stone and the other a fine brick warehouse (now a bank) by Walters. The new building, however, has a crowded appearance which the other avoids. Six storeys have been crammed into the height of five and it thereby suffers not a little in strength and apparent spaciousness. The detail, too, is a little overcrowded. The Roman pilasters, hardly in the character of the street, are an addition which still further reduces the plain wall. The older building has great strength and sedateness. Each storey is well-marked off with a strong cornice, and by grouping the windows in pairs the architect has been able to emphasise the strength of the piers between them. Certainly these are two of the best buildings in the street. Continuing on the left-hand side,





*Messrs. S. and J. Watts & Company's Warehouse, Portland Street.*



## *Portland Street*

we come to a large mill-like building, to which the owners have recently added a couple of storeys. In the addition, however, seven windows on the top floor out of some twenty, and not the centre seven, have been singled out for a special stone decoration. It is difficult to conceive a sufficient reason for this. It looks as if these particular windows served some club the members of which desired to indicate that they may be in Portland Street but are not of it.

On the right-hand side about here we have the great strange stone block of Messrs. S. and J. Watts and Company's premises. It is an enormous pile and contains probably the oddest collection of detail in Manchester, and yet the whole is not without character. It starts with a strong battering base broken by two rather fine Genoese Renaissance entrances. The basement from its batter may be said to be Egyptian. The ground floor is certainly Italian, the first Elizabethan, the second Italian, the third François Premier, the fourth a plain storey of

## *Portland Street*

square columns without windows—the most satisfactory,—and above, at intervals, four square towers, each containing large French Gothic rose windows. Yet, in spite of this catholicity of taste, because of its great mass behind a cliff-like wall, its evenly-spaced windows, its continuous string courses and cornices, the Portland Street spirit is maintained and the whole is rather impressive. Opposite, at the corner of York Street, is a good building with big piers and arches, but because it is not in the character of the street, but leans to something more theatrical, it seems thoroughly unsatisfactory where it is. Following this, and stretching to the open space where the old Infirmary stood, is the big stone pile of Messrs. Barlow and Jones, regular and with the right character, but rather coarse and crude in detail. There is something rather naïve, too, about the way a heavy triangular pediment is placed in each storey, except the top, to every alternate window. It seems to suggest a partner and

## *Portland Street*

a clerk are placed alternately one behind each, and that their relative importance had to be indicated. To see how Italian detail to such windows should be used, giving to each floor its separate emphasis and value, one has only to look at the fine block opposite, which stretches from No. 23 to No. 27. Probably this block competes with that of the Hollins Mill Company, also on the right-hand side and facing the square, for pride of place among the stone warehouses of Italian inspiration. There is a fine range of such buildings facing the proposed site of the new Art Gallery, but before we come to them the brick Gothic block from No. 29 to No. 33 must be mentioned because, with its bay windows running up the front and its octagonal piers, it is absolutely contrary to the Portland Street type. Among its larger and more stately neighbours it pays the penalty for this. Seen up or down the street it has an extraordinarily crumpled appearance, as if it was in the process of being badly squeezed. It should serve as a warning to any architect



## *Portland Street*

who is tempted to thwart the prevailing common sense.

All the rest of the street facing the square is very fine. One great stone Italian block succeeds the other. Some are of the earlier Renaissance type, some of the later, some severer, some freer ; but all maintain the amenities of wall plane and street character, and consequently all are good civil street architecture. When you get accustomed to their blackness you even like it as adding to their sombre dignity. I am a little doubtful whether the public spirit of Messrs. Richardson, Tee, Rycroft, and Co., is rightly displayed in having window-boxes full of bright flowers to each window. Such a treatment seems more appropriate to the Queen's Hotel, next door, than to a Portland Street warehouse. The Hollins Mill building, on the other side, a magnificent composition, appears to look down with slight disapproval at its gaily-decked neighbour. Whether this is so or not, Portland Street is ending here with

## *Portland Street*

some of the finest and most dignified buildings in Manchester, proving again that in its warehouses Manchester can reach architectural heights which other towns only reach, if at all, in far more pretentious structures.

VII

MARKET STREET

MARKET STREET, as its name rightly implies, is devoted to retail trade. A first glance at the street shows this very clearly. Other streets may be lined with shops along the pavement and yet serve other purposes. Here there may be in places a few offices above the shops, but it is the shops which dominate. Unfortunately their manner of doing so is not always the most desirable. A shop may call attention to itself by the elegance of its window display or, if it is a great store with its own building, by the impressiveness of its architecture. It may do this latter, too, without looking like a public building on the one hand or a domestic one on the other. There is, however, an alternative method much more in vogue in England where





*Market Street.*



## *Market Street*

the shops are gradually growing from the foot pavement upwards. It is an unfortunate method, and Market Street offers endless examples. It is the method of spreading lettering, gold by day and electric by night, over the superstructure. No doubt it is cheap; you do not have to buy the building above but merely to pay a rent for the right of disfiguring it. It is an uncivil method, one which pays no regard to one's neighbours or to the dignity of the town. It is the method of the street hawker shouting his wares, and, worst of all, it soon leads to a competition in that objectionable process. Each tries to outcry the other. Architecture is, of course, very soon forgotten. Her shy graces fade away. There are certain sections of Broadway, New York, which are a mere background to advertisements. Piccadilly Circus is getting much the same. In Manchester Market Street appears to be the devoted spot. My suggestion is that it should be allowed to remain so, but that the privilege of destroying good



buildings should be reserved to it alone. Something of this sort has happened in New York. Fifth Avenue is saved at the expense of Broadway. There is, too, this other advantage. Once a street sinks so low or rises high enough, according to the point of view, in this matter of electric signs and gilt lettering, it takes on a new interest. It becomes a sort of Wembley, or Earl's Court, where no one looks for anything but to be amused and diverted. If that is good for certain sorts of retail trade, let that sort be segregated. It is the town's amusement park, and architectural criticism is stilled.

Market Street seems half-way to this ideal, just as its shops are half-way to becoming big stores. When they are all like Messrs. Henry's or Messrs. Lewis's they will not need their cloak of letters. It will then be realised that a whole building as an entity is a better advertisement. For evidence of this notice the quiet yet very effective way Messrs. Lewis's have put up their name over their shop windows. If they had

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done as their neighbours, they would have run the risk of suggesting some of the upper floors were not their own. Soon, I feel sure, our great stores will go a step farther, as the American ones even the less expensive, have done, and be content to show one or two articles in quite small ground floor windows, indicating thereby that the whole building is a vast magazine within which everything can be seen and everyone is welcome.

Market Street starts, however, quietly enough from Exchange Street. It is only as it mounts the slight hill towards Piccadilly that its voice rises to a scream. In the first portion the buildings still master the shops. This is done very decisively on the right-hand side between Exchange Street and Cross Street, where the shops are under the Royal Exchange in more senses than one. Above them is a strong stone plinth from which rise the great columns. Tempting as it must be to them no shop has yet been allowed to break with gilt lettering the

## *Market Street*

plainness of this plinth. The result is that the shops below have all had to rely on the display of their wares for their attractive force, and very good it has been for them. These latter, too, are all concentrated at the eye level. A street arranged on such lines has many advantages. It leaves room for good architecture above and compels good arrangement within the limited shop windows below. All shopping streets in the eighteenth century must have been like this. Probably in the twenty-first century all such streets will be streets of great stores. This will allow good architecture too. It is the intermediate stage which presents the difficulty.

One sees the breaking-down process going on on the opposite side. There, from No. 5 to No. 11, was once a good stone range of buildings with regularly spaced long-fluted pilasters with square-headed Georgian windows between them. It is an archaeological exercise to disinter the design from the opposite side of the street. The first portion of the façade has been painted white,



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and round-arched window dressings have been applied to the square-headed windows at the first-floor level. Farther on some of the pilasters have been cut off at the waist to allow the insertion of a large display window and an additional sign. This has been done in the case of Messrs. Woodrow, the hatters, and Messrs. Batty and Sons, while nearly all the shops on the ground level have felt it necessary to add great signs on the roof to suggest, I suppose, that they occupy the whole of the premises. Here is the twentieth century gradually devouring the elegance of the early nineteenth.

After this start there is nothing of architectural interest until we come to Irene Chambers, at the corner of Corporation Street. This is a stone building of very refined architecture with its windows regularly spaced. Unfortunately a good street front by its very regularity and flatness offers a fine field for lettering. Here two newspapers, one a morning and one an evening paper, have edged the building about with great letters

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illuminated at night. The vertical letters at the corner partially hide a very interesting phenomenon. The return flank to Corporation Street appears to me to have once been a stone elevation of the same detail to that in Market Street. On to this it seems that further enrichments and architectural detail have been applied in plaster. If I am right, it is as if the owner of the Corporation Street front did not think his well-cut cloth coat good enough and had decorated it with paper trimmings—adding plaster “pep” to a stone design, as our American friends might say. Burns Chambers next door is an Italian design, good, but not so good as Irene Chambers. After this, however, Market Street takes its final plunge. Architectural decency and Western civilisation are thrown to the dogs. From here to the next side street, No. 35-37, is a modern terra-cotta glazed structure in an Earl’s Court brand of Turkish architecture. Five glazed minarets rise from the second floor with cement towers behind them. Below are the balconies

## *Market Street*

and horseshoe windows of pantomine. Unless Market Street is definitely an amusement park, such a building is not a little unfair to its neighbourhood. Messrs. Lyons, however, who occupy it, seem not displeased with it, for they have put their name round it in gilt letters. After breaking loose like this Market Street throws all restraint to the winds. The buildings are of all heights, and the sign letterings as varied and almost as large as the shops themselves. Occasionally one building, like No. 45A, tries to recover some sort of dignity, but it is practically submerged. This particular building—a tall stone block—has, for instance, a pretty little thing in white paint picked out with black mouldings under its arm. Such a partner makes dignity absurd. Away with such pretentiousness. Let us be gay at all costs.

On the opposite side, however, is something both new and good. Tortworth House, at the corner of Pall Mall, promises to be by far the best building in the street. It consists, above



## *Market Street*

the shops, of a range of strong stone pilasters of interesting detail, with delicate little steel bay windows between them. A strong frieze storey with square windows binds the whole together. There is a good cornice above that and again a steeply sloping roof of grey slates. The canted corner is well-treated by omitting the windows at the third floor level, so gaining plainness and strength at this important point. The architects, Messrs. Halliday, Paterson, and Agate, are to be congratulated. May their elegant little building survive for at least six months free from Market Street lettering, so that all may have a chance of seeing it.

For the rest of the street one can only comment on the gradual submergence of the architecture. There was once something interesting in stone from 42-50, but it is now almost buried, while on the left-hand side a big building, never very good, I imagine, has been eaten into on the two lower storeys to make way for a barn of large but polished timbers where hats are sold.

## *Market Street*

On the right-hand side a range of Greek Ionic columns, which suggests the home of some learned society, is buried under the huge letters of an advertising company of dentists. Even Messrs. Henry's new premises have been almost entirely obliterated, but one hopes, as the signs are in paper, that this is but a temporary veiling of its face to meet the exigencies of the bazaar.

With this block on the right and Messrs. Rylands and Sons on the same side and Messrs. Lewis's on the left we come to the blocks for large single occupations. The chance of good architecture therefore revives. Messrs. Lewis's, however, have hardly risen to it. Their building is certainly impressive in bulk and in unity of composition, but it has rather a cardboard appearance, owing, I think, to the glass of the windows in each of its many storeys stretching from pilaster to pilaster. Certainly the massive turrets with domed tops at the two corners seem to overweight the sub-structure, while the big

## *Market Street*

circular pediment in the centre of the front is too strong a feature for the pierced wall to which it clings. Still the block by its size and uniformity dominates the street, while, as mentioned before, it sets a magnificent lesson in the right and effective use of lettering.

Messrs. Rylands and Sons' premises are respectable and dull until one comes to the last portion, No. 129-135. This is a charming stone front which must surely be by the same architect who built Irene Chambers lower down the street. Here, fortunately, the street changes its name to Piccadilly, so that one need not pursue it farther, for one notices that Piccadilly surpasses even Market Street both in the thickness of its rash of gilt letters and in the exotic character of some of its architecture. Messrs. Lyons, for instance, have another and still stranger Turkish building. Let us turn our back and hasten as quickly as possible to Spring Gardens, where hides the General Post Office. Manchester secretes in strange places her finest buildings.

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Here, in contemplating a really noble one, we may soon forget the strident tones of Market Street and rejoice that this great building, though near at hand, is just beyond its influence.



VIII

OXFORD STREET

OXFORD STREET seems as a street to have no definite character. It has not yet made up its mind whether it will be a street of warehouses, in the Manchester sense, or whether it will be one of retail trade and kinemas. Perhaps this is why its great modern blocks of warehouse architecture, such as the Calico Printers' building and Messrs. Tootal Broadhurst Lee Company's premises, are not so impressive, in spite of their size, as the best of the Portland Street ones. They seem to aim at being more than warehouses, to attempt by overdressing an urbanity unsuited to their character, as if they felt that the fine severity of the warehouse, as Manchester has evolved it, could not live happily alongside such buildings as the Hippodrome. No doubt

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it could not, but it would be the Hippodrome which would suffer, and that hardly needs our sympathy. Although, too, in Oxford Street proper, as distinguished from its continuation Oxford Road, retail trade has not yet assumed the proportions or the demeanour it has in Market Street, yet, by its lettered signs and general air of untidiness, it makes the street in its present stage of development seem a little unworthy of the great buildings which it has attracted. No doubt to-day we are seeing it in a period of transition. When it is completely lined from the railway bridge to St. Peter's Square with blocks of warehouses or offices, when its kinemas and music-halls have gone elsewhere and its widening is complete, we shall feel again it is one of Manchester's great thoroughfares, starting from the heart of the city and leading with noble width and gradually lessening buildings past the University group through open squares to the open country. The Oxford Road part of the thoroughfare appears, therefore, to have

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a fine future and purpose ahead of it—that of linking both culture and leisure, those inseparable sisters, with their parent, business. One must admit, however, that Oxford Road seems at present entirely unconscious of this high destiny.

Oxford Street proper starts from St. Peter's Square, with a very good building at the right-hand corner. It appears now to be mainly used by the Bradford Dyers' Association, and if it is not by the hand of Walters, who built the fine warehouse at the corner of Portland Street and Charlotte Street, it must have been by a pupil or associate of his. The same motives are to be seen in each—the grouped windows, the strong cornices, the same powerful combination of brick and stone, and, most important of all, the same insistence that the total mass of the building should tell its tale. There is another somewhat similar building at the corner of Hall Street, with a fine flank to that street, but it is neither so refined nor so good. Between these two strong men stands, a little uncomfortably,

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the very feminine plaster-faced Prince's Theatre. At first, from its strange and wiry detail, one is apt to dismiss this theatre off-hand as a bad survival of an insincere period. There is a certain grotesqueness, for instance, in having every alternate corbel to a cornice finish as a thin caryatid figure helping to support its load with a pair of wiry little arms. On a second glance, however, one sees that the composition of the front, with its strong cornice and broad frieze, its range of little round windows below, somewhat like those of the Haymarket Theatre in London, and then its range of round-arched French windows and niches alternately, is broad and simple, allowing a fine amount of plain wall. No, the Prince's Theatre is not to be despised. Externally—I know nothing about the interior—it can give any number of points to the modern Hippodrome lower down the street.

On the same side of the street, after passing a rather mill-like warehouse, but with a good frieze effect obtained in a simple manner by



brick panels between the top-floor windows, we come to a great modern effort, slightly set back for street widening. It is a big new building in yellow brick and yellow terra-cotta called Prince's Buildings. This is obviously a building upon which a great deal of thought has been expended, so that, although it breaks all the canons, one cannot dismiss it cavalierly. To mention first what I think to be its worst point, it is to be noticed that, instead of ending against the sky with the strongly drawn lines of cornice and roof, this building boldly shoots up a row of tall chimneys. Now chimneys in town architecture are generally by custom and convention, considered not to exist. They are often set back and not visible from the street, but, even if not, one does not look at them. In the country it is different. There they form part of the landscape and quite appropriately suggest happy domesticities. Here the architect has made the six great chimneys his chief feature. He has, as if to emphasise them still further, linked them

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together with semi-circular sunk parapets, very much in the manner of some suburban fences. In my opinion this makes a very weak outline against the sky and does not justify the innovation. For the rest, below the chimneys there are strong plain piers, out of which they grow, and an even distribution of windows. The detail is small and carefully designed to suit, as far as possible, the terra-cotta in which it is made.

Between Chepstow Street and Bridgewater Street, on the same side of the road, is another brick and terra-cotta building, or is it two buildings or a whole group of buildings? One cannot tell, so haphazard is the composition, if such a word can be applied to it. Anyhow, it is a very strident collection of masses, with great unseemly projections and recesses, a tower, and two gables. It has all the exuberance of a pre-Wembley exhibition building, but unfortunately for Manchester is built in hard and permanent materials. I can find no good words for it, but many bad. Let us pass on.

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All this while on the left-hand side there has been nothing of note, save the building at the far corner of Portland Street, but this was dealt with in considering that street. Most of the buildings passed have been old domestic ones altered into shops and offices, and much damaged in the process. But by the time we are opposite, but with our back to, the Hippodrome, we have reached on this side the vast structure of the Calico Printers. It is in good honest Portland stone, and a great effort. It is dealt with in detail later, but one cannot at any time in any sense of the word pass it unnoticed. It is a building in which, as a whole, the wall face is well maintained, so that its mass tells. The passer-by feels its presence. I think, however, he would feel it more if its skyline had not been broken by the (comparatively) small turret in the centre and if its surface had not been corrugated in three places by unnecessary and rather meaningless pilasters. These give the building a municipal flavour, which is wrong. The best portions are

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the great fields of windows in between. The Americans, who had had more experience in buildings of this size than we have, almost invariably leave theirs as plain as possible. They do not attempt to elongate ordinary features like columns and pilasters in order to stretch them to these extraordinary proportions. Further, Americans generally content themselves with enriching the bases and tops of such buildings, thereby emphasising the outline and so the size. They do not spread the ornament over the whole façade. Windows are left as holes in the wall, giving by their numbers a texture to the surface. Here each has its moulded architrave and many have little columns as well. This over-emphasises the windows and thereby again reduces the effect of size. Still this was an early effort at big building in England, and, as such, was on the whole surprisingly successful. The old plaster Palace Theatre seems not a little out of place next to this giant structure. In spite of its plentiful gilt, too, it does not look



very much like a theatre. If the corner turret were removed one could imagine the whole building a pleasant mid-Victorian hostelry. The arched opening between the restaurant and the theatre is obviously the entrance to the stable yard. I should be tempted to call "Ostler" if I could see the gorgeous creature who opens the doors, though I fear he might take it as an insult, so little does one understand one's relative importance in the world.

Messrs. Tootal Broadhurst Lee and Company's building, opposite and far too near the great Calico Printers', is not nearly so successful as the latter for a big block. First, it suffers from its hard, bad materials, pressed brick and terracotta, and then by covering the whole of each face with the trappings which belong by tradition not only to smaller buildings, but to buildings of another type. Engaged columns, returned entablatures, pediments, and all the paraphernalia of classical architecture cannot be detached from temple and palace and spread, even lightly—

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and here it has been done with rather a heavy hand—over the vast surfaces of a large warehouse.

In the Refuge Insurance building, the last of these great blocks before the railway bridge ends the street, Mr. Waterhouse has been much more successful. He has indeed used the same materials, though his terra-cotta and pressed brick are of one colour, and the latter, being very small, disguise their flinty surface somewhat by the multiplicity of the joints involved. He has, too, wisely chosen very small-scale detail with which to ornament his façades. Therefore, and because he has covered the whole face of his blocks with it, the ornament becomes a mere texture, and the walls, and with them the mass of the buildings, are allowed to tell. This being so, it is strange that the tower, which separates the two blocks, is entirely different both in scale and character. It relies upon masses of strongly contrasting material, granite and unrelieved brickwork, for its effect. Taken as a unit the tower is very successful. Taken with the two blocks, one

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on either side of it, it hardly seems to belong to them at all. It looks rather like a tall young man in flannel trousers escorting two charming, but somewhat delicate old ladies dressed in lace. Next to the warehouse, however, with which we started the street, the Refuge is the best building, and, consequently, makes a pleasant note with which to finish.

IX

SOME RECENT STREET FRONTS TO  
WAREHOUSES

MANCHESTER warehouses, at any rate the more recent ones, differ from those of London and Liverpool in that in addition to storage space for a number of firms they have to provide office accommodation for representatives of these same firms. The result is that the building block has generally office windows and character to the main street and warehouse ones to the side and back. This leads, naturally, but rather unfortunately, to buildings which may be described as having Queen Anne fronts with Mary Anne backs. The Queen Anne part, too, is on a smaller scale to the Mary Anne part, for the office which each firm takes is only a subsidiary one consisting of a few very small rooms. The



## *Some Recent Street*

disparity between the parts, therefore, of the back and front is all the more marked. On the front there have to be a number of small windows with the trimmings and finish now expected for offices, while at the back concrete blocks or rough brickwork in big spaces with occasional large windows seem to suffice. The architectural problem, therefore, is a very different one to that of the old warehouse with one office on the ground floor but all above massive, simple and plain. It was possible to make these latter, as Manchester has proved time and again, very effective blocks of strong masculine architecture. The solutions offered to the new problem are certainly not so masculine and one doubts whether, with all their elaboration, they are really so effective. Let us look at a few examples.

The great building for the Calico Printers' Association in Oxford Street, though built in 1912, is the obvious one to start with. It was designed after a competition by a combination of two firms of architects, Messrs. Fryer and



*The Calico Printers' Building, Oxford Street.*



## *Fronts to Warehouses*

Penman, and Messrs. Charles Clegg and Son. It is an enormous block in Portland stone, 306 feet long and 166 feet from pavement to the top of the tower. Such a cliff of cut stone over a hundred feet high was bound to be imposing. It hardly required, in consequence, any architectural trappings. Indeed, one could wish that the cliff had merely had a great cornice to protect it like the similar cliff of a Florentine palace. If the main cornice of the Calico Printers' building had run unbroken for the whole 300 feet what an imposing effect it would have given the mass below. Instead the cornice, which is in itself a well marked feature, ceases altogether in the centre of the building where the tower rises above a great triangular pediment. This pediment which has the same detail as the main cornice is a storey lower down and, therefore, with the cornice missing above looks most certainly to have slipped from its proper place. The fact is that the architects have been trying to add to the Queen Anne portion of their building



## *Some Recent Street*

Wren-like features, when the programme itself calls for nothing but storey after storey of small windows. At the centre and at either end they have designed a large feature consisting of four pilasters with great pediment over them. Now, although these pilasters start at the second floor level, the building is too lofty for the pilasters to reach to the main cornice and entablature and remain of manageable size. Hence the lowering of the pediments and their conflict with the cornice. Such troubles always come about from going beyond the programme. The comparatively plain field of the building between these great features is admirable and successful. The tier upon tier of office windows explain themselves exactly, whereas the great ornate pilastered and pedimented features suggest municipal offices, rates, taxes and other similar troubles.

As a contrast to this block, though not as an entirely successful solution to the same problem, there is close by Bridgewater House, in Whitworth

## *Fronts to Warehouses*

Street, of which Mr. Fairhurst is the architect. This building is not quite as large as the Calico Printers' block but is comparable to it. The chief material used, however, is not so pleasant. Instead of Portland stone the architect, for economy, has had to be content with terra-cotta which has not the faculty of getting dirty in the same gentlemanly way as stone. Mr. Fairhurst has given his building a very fine basement of the three lower storeys knit together by strongly rusticated piers and a strong cornice. In this basement he has two great entrances in granite with the granite cleverly recessed as a precious material within the terra-cotta, as, indeed, it is in comparison. So far the building is very impressive and successful. Above the chief cornice of this basement, however, it breaks out in a number of oriel windows entirely destructive of the wall surface. By the overhang of these windows on to the cornice below the architect has cleverly but at a sacrifice to the total effect been able to obtain extra floor space for the

small offices in front of the main building line and I can understand them being very pleasant features in the interior, each bay window serving a private office. The problem, though, of successfully combining these semi-domestic features with his strong basement has not been solved. Perhaps it would have been nearer solution if the main cornice had been allowed to run through unbroken. Unfortunately the centre three oriels run up a storey higher and the main cornice is pushed up with them. The result is the total mass of the building loses the emphatic outlines its size warrants.

The same architect has been much more successful in two smaller warehouses, Messrs. Barclay's, in Whitworth Street, and Messrs. Reiss's, in Quay Street. Here, perhaps, the single ownership made possible a greater unity in the design. The Barclay warehouse has a purely symmetrical front with the main cornice lines running through. The only oriel windows it has—and somehow one does not connect oriel

## *Fronts to Warehouses*

windows with warehouses—are used as terminal features at either end of the façade and stop a storey short of the main cornice so that they do not interfere with it. This building has a fine arcaded basement and a strong well-modelled central doorway. Mr. Fairhurst seems particularly successful with the strength he gives to the base of his buildings in spite of the large window area he provides. His cornices have an emphatic square projection which enables them to mark off the main divisions of his façades with great clearness. This is particularly the case in the Reiss warehouse. As you approach it down Quay Street you cannot help being struck with the strength of its horizontal lines. In this respect it is a great improvement on Bridgewater House where, on the whole, the vertical lines of the oriels predominate—always a mistake in street architecture. The Reiss warehouse has, I imagine, been cut back for questions of light and air, but the setting-in so required has been very effectively used to enhance the apparent



### *Some Recent Street Fronts to Warehouses*

power of the building. It sits back with dignity and this, again, is due to the well-marked stages of the building each with its strong projecting string course. In these warehouses of Mr. Fairhurst's there are no super-imposed large features as in the Calico Printers' palace. They accept the simple conditions of their existence with much greater readiness and ease, especially these two latter ones, and are for that very reason the more successful.

## *Two Recent Monumental Buildings*

### X

#### TWO RECENT MONUMENTAL BUILDINGS

MANCHESTER has, during recent years, erected two buildings which may with justice be said to have been designed in "the grand manner." They are the New Arts Building for the University, by Mr. Percy Worthington, in Lime Grove, and the new theatre in Quay Street, now called the Opera House, by Messrs. Richardson and Gill of London. Obviously the term "the grand manner" refers to scale rather than to size and by custom it is used among architects to denote buildings in which the classical styles of Greece and Rome are used in their native purity, as far as that is possible under modern conditions, and not in any renaissance version of them. It implies, therefore, buildings conceived with a high sense of unity in which all

superfluous detail and features are suppressed. Such buildings are apt to look austere and rather remote among the picturesque jumble of a modern English town but they serve a very useful purpose in setting an ultimate standard by which to judge buildings of less serious intent. Of the two buildings mentioned the Arts building for the University is, naturally, the more solemn and severe. To express its functions the architect has chosen the Roman Doric order and has maintained a Doric simplicity and strength throughout. In the Opera House on the other hand, while keeping nearly as great a scale, the architects have chosen a rich version of the Ionic Order, with the festive implications this order of Asiatic origin carries. Let us take these buildings in turn and consider them briefly.

The new University building is in a narrow and rather mean street. In one way this enhances the building for one comes upon it as a surprise, not less so, too, after one has seen the older University buildings in Oxford Street. But in

## *Monumental Buildings*

another and more serious sense it is a great pity that it is situated where it is. Its simple masses, great scale and bold outline call for some commanding position facing a great square or on the brow of an acropolis-cliff overlooking the town. It is, indeed, a very powerful and commanding building, strong and masculine in its lines and masses, yet where it stands it has nothing to command and, I suppose, a very small portion of Manchester's population to impress. It consists of a single long rectangular mass with three strongly projecting masses, one in the centre and one at either end. These latter masses each of two lofty stories would project rather crudely if they were not linked by a one-storey projection with its balustrade, which as it were threads them all together. As it is a certain slight crudity or rather over emphasis does exist by the fact that for reasons of economy the architect has had to restrict the use of stone which such a monumental manner seems to imply, to his centre feature. His



main body, his projecting wings and his linking feature are all in red brick and although the crowning cornice and frieze to the whole building, as well as the subsidiary dressings, are in stone, the ideal unity which such a building calls for is endangered by the mixture. The stone centre block consists of one of the most effective features in all classical architecture a *portico-in-antis*, that is to say an entrance in which the great lintel across the main piers is assisted by two great columns running the whole height of the building. These are the only columns used on the exterior but they are echoed by shallow pilasters to the end features so that one feels throughout the nobility a great order always gives a building even when sparingly used. Here the two great Roman Doric columns which set this key-note are of magnificent scale—as great as that of any building in the town—and are fully fluted and moulded. They are splendid and impressive ornaments to the structure and are set with a fine broad flight of steps before them,

## *Monumental Buildings*

retained, in the Roman way, by low broad stone walls, some day, it is hoped, to be crowned with the massive lamp-posts the architect has designed for them. When one passes through these columns and looks at the door itself, with its two splendidly-modelled lions' heads upon it, one sees that all the details of this entrance have been carried out with the refinement a great classical order calls for, but which it so rarely gets to-day. If one passes through the doors into the large vaulted entrance hall beyond, with its four great Ionic columns, like the cella of the Parthenon, one sees further that this magnificent doorway leads to a worthy hall and not to some mere corridor or tiled vestibule. Indeed, I hear that Greek Plays have already been acted in this entrance hall, a pair of the Ionic columns making a very suitable proscenium. Has a modern entrance hall ever before had so fine a compliment paid to it?

The opera House in Quay Street is a very different piece of work, much more sophisticated

in design as a modern theatre must necessarily be, yet sharing with the Arts Building the qualities of great scale, simplicity of main mass and outline which entitle it to be called "in the grand manner." The manner here, though, has not the same classical severity as in the former building but is classical architecture adapted to a modern purpose in the way in which the architects of the First Empire worked. Indeed, the building rather suggests the affected classical modes of that period, when ladies appeared in the streets of Paris lightly draped in Greek robes and is, perhaps, all the more interesting for its purpose for that reason. The great cornice outlining the slope of the roof, but not turned into a Greek pediment by a long horizontal member, is strictly in the Empire manner. So are the slender lamps from Herculaneum (discovered about that time) between the columns, the shields with heads on them, the Greek frets, gilloches and other running ornament. But the building is more imposing than any Empire

## *Monumental Buildings*

building of its size that I know ; its main façade to Quay Street has a more striking composition with its massed pylons of Greek Ionic columns and the great arch connecting them. This arch has its tympanum filled with a very fine relief of a three-horsed chariot. Indeed, the detail throughout is of the scholarly but interesting and lively type to be found in any building to which Professor Richardson's name is attached. But what makes this exterior so striking and so different to that of any modern theatre or cinema I know is the simplicity and strength of its main lines. The building is sufficiently rhetorical for its purpose yet remains in essence dignified and simple. All the varied functions of a theatre are indicated but without a trace of vulgarity. This in theatre design at the present time is in itself no small achievement. Although I am only here dealing with exteriors Manchester should also be proud of the interior which is one of the finest auditoriums in the country.



XI

SOME MANCHESTER WAREHOUSE WAR  
MEMORIALS

WHY, on the whole, have our War Memorials been so unsatisfactory? I can only suggest, and it is a painful suggestion, that there have not been sufficient thought and deep feeling put into them. We have been too ready to accept the conventional idea, to copy the cross or obelisk of our neighbours, even to go to the same wholesale warehouse for them. Firms deal in such things, strange as it may sound; there are catalogues, price-lists, and designs for every taste. No wonder, therefore, we have got designs for every taste nearly everywhere, from the memorial that looks like an enlarged athletic trophy to the frivolous little decorative tablet which might commemorate any passing event.

## *Warehouse War Memorials*

What should be the qualities of a war memorial great or small? I think that we would all agree to-day that solemnity suited to a tragic event rather than any expression of the pomp of victory should be the prevailing motive. Such solemnity can be obtained in many ways, architectural or sculptural or in both combined. The sure way not to obtain it is by realism, either in the architecture or the sculpture. By realism in architecture I mean the hackneyed and ordinary, just as by realism in sculpture one means the obviously representational rather than the significant work. For instance, in architecture the ordinary Corinthian column of commerce could not be used in a satisfactory memorial however large, whereas one can imagine a very impressive memorial consisting of a circle of restrained Greek Doric columns, in the manner of Stonehenge, on some bleak hillside. So in sculpture the wholly realistic figure of a soldier in full accoutrements in any attitude is bound to be banal and unsatisfactory. The

artist must give that figure breadth and solemnity, some deep significance, to make it seem typical and worthy of the great company of the dead.

These thoughts are called forth by some singularly successful war memorials which have been recently erected in certain Manchester warehouses and some less so. In the entrance portico of the warehouse of Messrs. S. and J. Watts, in Portland Street, is a monument in which two young artists have collaborated, Mr. Hubert Worthington the architect, and Mr. S. C. Jagger, one of our recent Rome Scholars in sculpture. The warehouse itself is a large dark Victorian structure in stone, which, though broken in the upper stories into rather fantastic shapes, has a base of great scale and strength. Into this base two entrances are pierced, each forming a columned and arcaded loggia. The external columns of each are in stone, in keeping with the exterior, the internal ones in scagliola, that is to say in an imitation marble. The latter columns are small in scale and with their adjacent

## *Warehouse War Memorials*

detail seem rather frivolous for their position. The war memorial is placed at either end of this loggia and consists of a colossal figure of a soldier at one end standing in his cloak and helmet, with his legs slightly apart, giving the impression of immense firmness and strength. The bronze figure is placed on a strong, simple grey granite pedestal and faces a large slab of the same granite at the opposite end of the loggia on which the inscription is cut in finely-designed letters. Now this figure of a soldier is very far from any obvious realism and is the first satisfactory figure of a soldier I have seen in a modern war memorial. It is extraordinarily impressive as it stands there with intense immobility, though a little large and crude perhaps for its surroundings. Such a figure makes one understand the rock of national character against which the German flood broke in vain. It is truly monumental in its combined steadfastness and power. It is sculpture like this and this only, free from any trivial suggestion, that can



at all express the depth of feeling the war called forth. Some day Messrs. Watts should remodel their loggia to suit better their fine and solemn memorial.

Another successful memorial of an absolutely different kind is a delicate one of carefully-chosen and fitted marbles by Mr. Sellars, in the staircase of the warehouse of the Tootal Broadhurst Lee Company in Oxford Street. Somewhat the shape of a tall clock case it stands against a wall of glazed tiles of a thick green colour—the most difficult background one could imagine. The architect has, however, isolated it as well as possible from the tiles by a black marble surround. On this he has built up a charmingly delicate structure of white and golden pink marble culminating in a niche at the top for a small bronze figure with a lamp. Below, in finely-drawn panels, are the names of the fallen. It is impossible to do justice in any description to the pious reserve of this delicate memorial. Anyone desirous of erecting a small memorial

## *Warehouse War Memorials*

should see this work of an accomplished Manchester artist before going further and certainly before going to a dealer.

A monument of a still different sort is that erected by the Refuge Company in their quadrangle and supplied by the Bromsgrove Guild, a firm which has supplied a great number of memorials. It consists of a tall granite pedestal with bronze panels for names on which is posed a bronze figure of victory. The whole thing fits the courtyard it is in very well. It is a charming piece of design in itself. It would make a delightful memento of any occasion less great and terrible than a modern war. For that it seems to me wholly inadequate both in feeling and design. The same remarks, though the design in this case is not nearly so good, apply to the well-placed but otherwise commonplace memorial also by the Bromsgrove Guild which has been erected on the staircase of the great Calico Printers' building.

Lastly let me draw attention to two finely-

## *Some Manchester Warehouse War Memorials*

modelled and engraved bronze plates on either side of the entrance hall in Messrs. J. and N. Phillips' warehouse in Church Street. This memorial, too, is by Mr. Hubert Worthington. I do not know whether he chose the words on the plate facing that containing the names but they are worth quoting, so appropriate and direct do they seem :

“ Remember the men of J. & N. Phillips who endured great hardships and achieved glorious deeds in the great war. These counting not their lives dear unto themselves died for Freedom and Country.”

THE END.













SOME  
MAN-  
CHESTER  
STREETS  
AND THEIR  
BUILDINGS

—  
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